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RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU PRIORITY 0033
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RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI PRIORITY 0035
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 JEDDAH 000335

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: OIC OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON COUP IN MAURITANIA AND
SITUATION IN GEORGIA

REF: REFTEL A JEDDAH 00740 (2006) REFTEL B JEDDAH 00103

Classified By: ACTING CONSUL GENERAL CB TONEY FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1.(S) BEGIN SUMMARY: The OIC advisor to the SYG reiterated concern and dismay over the recent coup in Mauritania. The official noted that an executive meeting of OIC member state ambassadors in NY could take the unusual move of preventing Mauritania (a member state) from attending an upcoming meeting of OIC Foreign Ministers as a response. With respect to Georgia, the OIC official noted that the deepening relationship between the organization and Russia makes taking a position particularly sensitive. END SUMMARY.

OIC DISAPPOINTED AT COUP IN MAURITANIA

2.(S) On August 12, PolOff spoke with Ufuk Gokcen, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Advisor to Secretary General (SYG) Ihsanoglu regarding the coup in Mauritania. The official reiterated the public statement made on August 6 (para 4) and noted that the OIC is continuing to encourage the democratic process in Mauritania while expressing disappointment with the coup. Gokcen noted that the OIC does not have a system by which to suspend the membership of Mauritania. He contrasted this with the ability of the African Union to suspend members. The implication was that the OIC would consider a suspension of Mauritania's membership if the internal laws of the organization allowed for this.

3.(S) Gokcen explained that an OIC executive meeting may take place in New York. This meeting would consist of the Ambassadors of Senegal, Pakistan, Egypt, Uganda, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia. According to Gokcen, the group might issue another statement expressing concern or disappointment over the coup. Another option that they could take is denying Mauritania the right to participate in an upcoming Ministerial Coordination meeting taking place in New York. It would be an unusual step to ban a member state from participating in a high-level meeting. This meeting occurs annually around the time of the UN General Assembly and consists of all OIC member state Foreign Ministers.

4.(U) On August 6, the OIC issued a public statement expressing strong support for democracy in Mauritania and a rejection of the coup staged against their freely elected government. SYG Ihsanoglu notes being, "dismayed by this development" and hopes that the matter can be, "handled

within the democratic principles and supremacy of law."

OIC RELUCTANT TO COMMENT ON GEORGIA,
FEELS INFLUENCE FROM RUSSIA

5.(S) The OIC is not ready to get involved or take a stand on the escalating violence in Georgia according to the official. Georgia is not a member state and while fighting is taking place in a country bordering several OIC members, they are not directly experiencing any violence.

6.(S) Gokcen said that the "Secretary General is nervous" because the events in Georgia are happening at a time when the OIC is developing a deeper relationship with Russia. He claimed that this makes taking any position on the matter "very sensitive."

7.(C) NOTE: Russia is an OIC Observer state, which offers them a greater deal of access and influence than other non-members might have. Observer states to the OIC have large Muslim communities and are supposed to have good relations with both internal and external Muslim populations. The acceptance of a country as an observer to the OIC is often politically motivated and does not lead to full membership (Reftel A). END NOTE.

8.(S) The SYG Advisor noted that if information reveals that Georgia's Muslim minority is affected then the OIC might take a position on the matter. Muslims make up around 10% of

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Georgia's population of 4.6 million. A significant number of these are individuals of Azeri ethnicity.

9.(S) COMMENT: The fact that the OIC is wary of making a statement on Georgia due to Russia's role is telling in how influential Russia has become on the organization's policies. Russia's influence in the OIC continues to play a significant role in deterring their acceptance of Kosovo as a member state (Reftel B). Russia's strong role at the OIC may be diminishing the ability of the US to foster support in the organization for its allies. This underscores the continuing importance of the diplomatic role played by the office of the OIC Special Envoy Cumber, who is scheduled to meet the SYG in Istanbul. The issue is likely to be raised by the SYG given the gravity of the situation in Georgia and Turkey's proximity to the fighting. If the conflict in Georgia leads to any significant refugee flows or other humanitarian crisis among the Muslim population there, it seems likely the OIC will be forced to make a statement. Given the wide-spread geographic nature of the attacks, it seems remote that Georgia's Muslims could escape any plight suffered by the population at-large. Any OIC statement can be expected to generally call for an end to hostilities, but is unlikely to cite Russia as the primary culprit. END COMMENT.
TONEY